(Statement of concern and call to mission adopted October 22, 1968, by the Fourth General Convention of The American Lutheran Church.)
DECISION IN A TIME 
OF NATIONAL CRISIS

A. For Such a Time as This

1. America is suffering a national crisis. It is a crisis equal to that 
of 1776, 1861, or 1933. It is a crisis of growing hate, hostility, frus-
tration, and alienation. The crisis grips urban, suburban, and rural 
America. No race, class, group, institution, section, or segment of 
America is untouched. So widespread a national crisis calls for clear 
analysis, resolute choices, and decisive action.

2. Central in this crisis is a ringing demand for justice and equity 
in all human relationships. Minorities demand for each person the 
respect, recognition, freedom, equality, opportunity, and protection 
due every human being, regardless of his race, religion, national 
origin, wealth, or any other condition of life. They demand equal 
justice under law, impartial enforcement of all laws, equality of 
opportunity, honesty in business dealings, fair prices, just wages, 
dependable goods and services, and the right to take part in making 
the decisions that affect them. Lonely voices demand an end to the 
exploitation, oppression, denial of opportunity, indifference, insensi-
tivity, and the other forms of inhumanity which they see inflicted too 
often by the strong on the weak. They demand that power be used 
to effect mercy, equity and opportunity, peace and freedom, right-
eousness and honor.

3. A growing recognition of the need for social justice explains 
efforts to promote better housing and education, sufficient and 
meaningful jobs, more adequate health and welfare services, and 
improved relations between the police and citizens. Justice and 
equity also are at stake in “agricultural parity,” “community develop-
ment,” “giving hope to the hopeless,” “one man-one vote,” “full 
political participation,” the “war on poverty,” “tax loopholes and 
incentives.” Justice and equity are involved in “white racism” and 
“black power,” in “selective conscientious objection” and “civil dis-
obedience.” Such catch-phrases in reality are cries for correction of 
warped relationships, individual and corporate, which impede the 
development of justice.
4. Beneath the surface symptoms of the present crisis lies a deep spiritual disarray. Widespread fear, loneliness, emptiness, and insecurity lead to personally and socially destructive behavior. Self-interest and the desire for power exist within and pose dangers in every group and person. Those who have acquired power or prestige and enjoy its fruits are fearful of the loss of their position. Those on the outside seek access to power and its opportunities, rewards, privileges, and responsibilities. When any group pursues its interests to the hurt or disadvantage of the inherent rights of others, the imbalance causes a crisis of warped relationships. Much “groaning in travail” accompanies the resultant struggle for new relationships and new structures, the rule of law and justice, and a more equitable sharing by more groups and persons in the privileges and responsibilities of society.

5. Today’s cries for justice and equity echo Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah, and the other Old Testament prophets. They call for the response of discipleship which Jesus described as love, obedience, and service. They are integral to the witness and work of the Christian community in its deeds of love active for justice. The American Lutheran Church takes seriously such Scriptural imperatives as: Do justice . . . abound in love . . . speak truth . . . bear one another’s burdens . . . defend the poor and fatherless . . . relieve the oppressed . . . show no partiality . . . follow after righteousness . . . be doers of the word . . . overcome evil with good . . . pray for one another . . . fear, love, and serve God. Therefore, The American Lutheran Church must heed and respond to the form and content which men’s cries for recognition and justice take in this time of national crisis.

B. Call to Urgent Mission

6. In this resolute task of heeding and responding to men’s cries in a troubled and suffering world the church must be a decisive participant. Involvement in concerns for justice inheres in its Christ-given mission. Human need is an arena of Christ’s work. Participation in His work is witness. The church’s involvement in the struggle for justice, equity, and mercy portrays parables of God’s love in action, points to signs of the Kingdom in our midst, evidences the good works by which men are drawn to see the Father, and testifies to its faith by deeds of love active for justice. As the church partici-
pates in the struggle for justice and equity it proclaims with integ-

rity that God is dynamically renewing and transforming all areas
of life. As it equips its members for their roles in society it extends
its influence into every one of their relationships.

7. To be true to its trust of preaching the good news of the king-

dom of God and of exemplifying the style of life in the kingdom of
God on earth, The American Lutheran Church must witness to the
inseparability of verbal proclamation from serving deeds of love
active for justice. Its response is one which moves resources into
action. Such a response involves a readiness to experiment and a
willingness to take risks. At its every level of organization The ALC
needs to evidence its genuine interest in and its honest concern for
the whole life of all men, without regard for their wealth, prestige,
social standing, race, political affiliation, or nationality. As the church
proclaims the message of redemption and release through the words
and deeds of its committed and responsive members it becomes the
channel for God’s transforming power to change hearts, lives, com-

munities, and the nation.

C. Identifying Our Objectives

8. Along with the nation within which it ministers, The American
Lutheran Church stands at a time of decision. It must choose reso-
lutely to rededicate itself to its purpose, “the proclamation and
propagation of the Christian faith, and the quickening and sancti-

fication of the members of its congregations . . .” (302). It needs
renewed emphasis and action on two of the methods to which it is
committed: “Study the problems of contemporary life and society
in the light of the Word of God, in order to make its contribution
toward solving these problems” (302.5, emphasis added), and “De-
velop programs for the promotion of human welfare . . .” (302.6).
It claims and proclaims the whole Gospel for the whole man by the
whole church to the whole world.

9. Toward this end, The American Lutheran Church identifies a
number of objectives toward which it must move in responding to
the challenge of the national crisis. Through each of these objectives
it must seek to influence human lives, to respect the integrity of
choices made in the free exercise of human dignity, to manifest the
servant role of the church, and to effect needed changes in public opinion and in the structures of secular society. Thus, we identify our mutual need to:

a. Seek understanding, in the light of the Word, of the meaning of crisis events in the nation so that The American Lutheran Church, hearing God’s judgments, can respond more effectively to His invitation to commitment, His call to a renewed national life, and the guidance He would give a people in crisis.

b. Increase our sensitivity and response to the human needs and aspirations of minority and economically-deprived groups and persons, working with them to secure justice, equity, their share in, and their right to contribute to America’s abundance, life, culture, and unity amid diversity.

c. Help build the wholesome attitudes essential to just, equitable, and responsive relationships and structures in society, motivating members of The American Lutheran Church to strive for needed changes in American society, which will bring about a greater measure of justice and equity for all persons.

d. Foster understanding of the potentialities of power to effect change, for good or for evil, and encourage the effective use of power to achieve creative and constructive social purposes.

e. Develop and use with telling moral effect various channels for action through which The American Lutheran Church, as a corporate body at each of its levels of organization and as members active in the structures of society, can participate in constructive movements to cope with the national crisis and its attendant evils.

D. Channels for Action

10. Numerous channels are open to The American Lutheran Church for a constructive attack on the crises of urban, suburban, and rural America. As illustrative of the possibilities we propose that The American Lutheran Church should:

a. Intensify efforts to acquaint the unchurched, regardless of their race, nationality, or social standing, with the promises and power of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and to welcome into the
participating fellowship of the congregation all who accept His invitation to membership in His church.

b. Increase the level of theological study and understanding, among both pastors and lay persons, of the mission and strategy of the church in an era of rapid and planned social change.

c. Encourage congregations to establish small groups where fellowship and growth in Christian maturity may be nurtured, so as to motivate the members of these congregations for service to their brothers and for service in the structures of society.

d. Undertake an intensive educational effort in The American Lutheran Church to increase understanding of the heritage of minority groups, the dehumanizing nature of racism and poverty, and the relationship of Christian discipleship to justice and equity.

e. Strengthen the supportive services of The American Lutheran Church to its congregations, pastors, agencies, and institutions in the inner city, in dwindling rural communities, and in areas where minority and economically-deprived groups and persons are located.

f. Involve minority group persons in the decision-making processes of The American Lutheran Church, and make greater use of minority group persons in the available employment opportunities at each level of The American Lutheran Church as a corporate body.

g. Help formulate and support sound goals of public policy relating to justice and a responsive society, especially focusing critical attention upon legislative, executive, and judicial efforts in the areas of housing, employment, education, welfare, health, and police and law enforcement practices.

h. Use corporate purchasing power to advance racial and social justice by considering the factor of affirmative action for equal employment opportunity as well as quality, cost, and availability of service in contracting for goods, services, and construction.

i. Expand financial and staff support to programs of community action and other cooperative ventures seeking justice and equity, where their aims, objectives, methods, and techniques are deemed
by responsible boards, institutions, and units of the church to be compatible with those of The American Lutheran Church.

j. Provide information on effective current programs and projects, and propose specific innovative or experimental programs which can be considered and adopted by groups within The American Lutheran Church, and assist, as resources permit, in the development of such programs and projects.

k. Expand educational opportunities, especially for the recruitment of church workers, through such means as (1) increased scholarships and remedial education programs for minority persons previous to entering and in their studies at the colleges and theological seminaries of The American Lutheran Church and (2) provision for specialized in-service training for those who serve the church in ghettos, poverty areas, and other situations of injustice and inequity.

l. Use investment funds of The American Lutheran Church, its congregations, and institutions, in such enterprises and activities as will benefit minority or economically-deprived peoples, to such degree and in such manner as those who bear legal responsibility for these funds may determine.

m. Place priorities on uses of funds which maximize programs and services to people and minimize investment in physical plant and facilities.

n. Cooperate, where possible and in accord with Lutheran theology, with churches and members of all Christian communions in renewal, witness, and service.

E. Christ for Crises: Hope for All Seasons

11. In its own decision-making in a time of national crisis The American Lutheran Church has the fortunate opportunity to combine preparations for the celebration of its Tenth Anniversary with a continuation and expansion of Project Summer Hope. The Church Council already has approved a church-wide anniversary theme and emphasis on “Christ for Crises,” reaching a crescendo on Pentecost Sunday, 1970, in accord with recommendations of the Commission on Evangelism for that anniversary celebration. This theme and emphasis at the same time can build upon, advance, and expand the
dimensions of "Project Summer Hope." This timely project served to
deepen and strengthen throughout The American Lutheran Church
the foundations of faith, hope, and love, these three with their
obedience, commitment, and readiness to sensitive service. There-
fore, we, the delegates to this Fourth General Convention, call for
the combining of preparations for a Tenth Anniversary celebration
and rededication with an enlargement and extension of Project
Summer Hope into a church-wide coordinated focus on CHRIST
FOR CRISES: HOPE FOR ALL SEASONS.

12. We, the delegates to this Fourth General Convention, expect
that the objectives we have identified in paragraph 9 and the chan-
nels for action we have proposed in paragraph 10 will be suitably
incorporated into the focus on CHRIST FOR CRISES: HOPE FOR
ALL SEASONS. We expect that all units and personnel at the na-
tional offices, and all districts, congregations, institutions, and agen-
cies, will incorporate into their total work and witness an appro-
riate expression of our requested focus on CHRIST FOR CRISES:
HOPE FOR ALL SEASONS.

13. Each district is requested to develop its own focus on
CHRIST FOR CRISES: HOPE FOR ALL SEASONS, through
which the objectives and channels for action adopted by this Con-
vention can become operative in that district. We look to each
district president and executive committee for leadership in this
direction.

14. Each parish (or neighboring parishes and congregations in
joint action) is requested to take effective steps for implementing
in its own area the objectives and measures of CHRIST FOR
CRISES: HOPE FOR ALL SEASONS. Materials and ideas sup-
plied by national and district offices should prove helpful but need
not bind or limit local efforts to fulfill the purposes to which every
member congregation of The American Lutheran Church is bound
in mutual commitment.

F. Openness and Creativity in Response to Crises

15. In a related action this Convention is called upon to structure
and to delegate authority for crisis action. It is beyond the com-
petence of this Convention, however, to prescribe the specifics where-
by the several levels and units of The American Lutheran Church can respond to its requested focus on CHRIST FOR CRISES: HOPE FOR ALL SEASONS. It expects each to relate faithfully, openly, and creatively as its special opportunities and responsibilities permit. Faithful stewardship of the Means of Grace, and discipleship in deed and in truth, permit no retreat from the crises of the world into the cloisters of ecclesiasticism. A committed people, turned to God in worship, prayer, and fellowship, must become a responsive people, their hearts open to the cries of a troubled and suffering world, their heads and hands working to make love active for justice and equity in all the structures of society.

16. The current national crisis contains great dangers to, yet also many opportunities for, the future of American society. Discerning choices must be made and wise actions planned in this time of decision. In its own hour of decision, The American Lutheran Church sees the national crisis as infusing its mission with a new dimension of heightened significance. It now commits itself to a renewed dedication and a strengthened obedience, as a servant of Jesus Christ, invoking the Holy Spirit to give it wisdom, power, and perseverance for its task.